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The Secretary of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

June 8, 1990

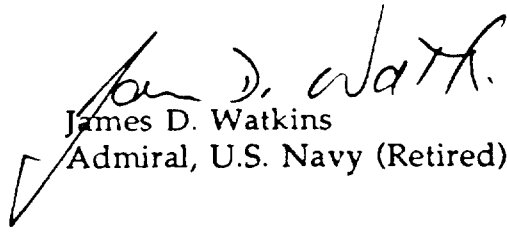
Honorable Ron De Lugo
Chairman, Subcommittee on Insular
and International Affairs
Committee on Interior
and Insular Affairs
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your letter of April 3, 1990, regarding the Department's Marshall Islands Program. The consolidation of medical surveillance, epidemiology, and other health matters into the new Office of Health, as I directed on March 27, 1990, already is underway. This new Office will have the responsibility for the Marshall Islands Program, including those issues relating to the habitability of Rongelap.

We will keep the Subcommittee informed about progress in this area. Please feel free to contact me if I may be of further assistance.

Sincerely,


James D. Watkins
Admiral, U.S. Navy (Retired)

cc: Robert J. Lagomarsino
Ranking Minority Member

John Rudolph's Files
Letter Files
Letters Marshall Islands 1990

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U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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April 3, 1990

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The Honorable James D. Watkins
 Secretary of Energy
 James Forrestal Building
 1000 Independence Avenue, S. W.
 Washington, D. C. 20585

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I have just received a copy of the final report of the Secretarial Panel for the Evaluation of Epidemiologic Research Activities which you appointed. Given this Subcommittee's continuing responsibility and concern for the people of Rongelap Atoll in the Marshall Islands, I was pleased to see the recommendation that the management responsibility for medical surveillance for the people of Rongelap, as well as the review and decision about the Phase II study of Rongelap, should become the responsibility of the consolidated office to be known as the Office of Occupational and Environmental Health and Safety.

I understand this to mean that the Marshall Islands program itself, as well as the management responsibility, is to be transferred from the Defense Programs Office of the Energy Department -- both at the headquarters in Washington and from the Nevada operations office -- into this new office and I would appreciate your confirming this. This recognition of the inherent conflict of interest that has existed within the Department on this matter is a giant step in the right direction.

I also understand that, as a result of the report, you have directed that this office be established immediately and prepare a coordinated implementation plan by May 1. I hope that one of the first tasks this new office will address will be the promised review of the safety and habitability of Rongelap.

My congratulations to your panel members and to you for your progress to date on this matter.

Sincerely,


 RON DE LUGO
 Chairman
 Subcommittee on Insular and
 International Affairs